

Hong Kong collaborates with Malaysia to detect illegal transboundary movement of hazardous electronic waste

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD), through cross-border collaboration, successfully detected a case of illegal export of waste printed circuit boards (PCBs) from Hong Kong to Malaysia. The exporter concerned, Union Fortune Limited, was convicted and fined \$13,000 by Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (September 14) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO).

A spokesman for the EPD said the department has been maintaining close contact and, from time to time, exchanging intelligence with Malaysian as well as overseas law enforcement agencies with a view to jointly combating illegal transboundary movements of hazardous electronic waste. In April, the EPD received a report from the relevant Malaysian authority on a Hong Kong exporter allegedly conducting the illegal export of hazardous electronic waste to its country. The EPD immediately conducted an in-depth investigation with the assistance of the Malaysian authority in the collection of evidence. It was confirmed that the exporter concerned illegally exported about 24 tonnes of waste PCBs, which were purported to be mixed metal scrap, from Hong Kong to Malaysia. The EPD thus initiated a prosecution against the exporter under the WDO.

The spokesman stressed that waste PCBs are hazardous electronic waste containing various heavy metals and other toxic chemical substances. They are regulated under the WDO. Improper disposal of such waste will cause harm to the environment and public health. The EPD will spare no effort in collaborating with overseas law enforcement agencies to rigorously combat illegal waste import and export activities, with a view to preventing Hong Kong from becoming a distribution hub for illegal import and export of waste.

The spokesman reminded importers and exporters in the waste recycling trade not to illegally import (including import into or transshipment through Hong Kong) or export controlled waste. According to the WDO, first-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment; for subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.